



## Summer 2019



Liesl Panke and Mike Braun, 2018/2019 Open Class winners

## From the President's Corner...

By Ray Tulloch

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Well, that is another big snow season in the record books! Well almost! Squaw Valley stayed open till July 7th and Mammoth Mountain continues lift served skiing into August! And following the end of our race season I have shared the slopes with many of you through May and June. Unfortunately, as we discovered in recent record seasons, the huge snowfall adversely impacted our race calendar, up to and including our season finals in mid-April. Despite all this we were still able to run 15 of our 22 original scheduled races so our race scheduler Mike Braun, and of course the resorts that worked so hard to host our races, deserve a huge vote of thanks from all of us. The constantly changing number of races also meant Deb Lewis, our Chief Technical Officer, was under continual pressure making on-the-fly updates to the season-long scoring for overall and class positions. As always of course, Deb was up to the challenge and kept us all up to date on positions and scoring. I know most of you do not see the huge level of personal effort Deb puts in behind the scenes to keep our race results and scoring systems – as well as all our other IT systems – functional and up to-date. Without this it would be extremely difficult to run our race program so huge thanks to Deb on behalf of all of us!

On the positive side the multiple changes in the program meant that a lot of class positions and overall top 10 positions were still to be decided at our season finals at Alpine Meadows. In fact many changed over the 2 days, going down to the wire in the last race, adding some excitement and pressure to the challenge to perform well. Congratulations to our overall Open Class Women's' and Men's' Champions - Liesl Panke and Mike Braun - for their outstanding season long performances. Full details of overall season results can be found at <https://farwestmasters.org/reports/results/2019/FWM2019-SeasonAwards.pdf>

As well as our Far West races we were also the host Division for Masters National Championships at Mammoth Mountain. Inevitably, as with the rest of the season, the weather again adversely impacted the schedule. Unfortunately, Groups C and D were only able to complete one race while Groups A and B were faced with running both a Super G and 2 runs of GS (the same length as the Super G!) on the same day. I can personally attest to how physically challenging this was! Despite the weather challenges Mammoth Race Director Beat and his race crew still put on an excellent event. Congratulations to Far West athletes Carol Levine, Leean Lupo, Gaetano Demattei and Ara Papazian for their overall class wins at Nationals and their nominations to the 2020 Spyder US Nationals Masters Team. We are still waiting for final confirmation of the location of next years Masters Nationals, we will send out an email update as soon as we can.

From a personal perspective, in my first season as President, I greatly appreciate the encouragement and support I have received from so many of you despite the various challenges posed by the weather etc. this season. I understand the logistical difficulties it creates for so many of you with regard to travel, time-off, accommodation etc. when it is uncertain whether we will be able to successfully run a race. We make our best efforts to provide you with as much information as possible as early as possible. Unfortunately, this means that on some occasions we may have to cancel races when in retrospect we could have run them and on other occasions we may have to cancel at the last minute or even on race day. However, be

assured we remain committed to running a quality race program and minimizing disruptive changes and wasted travel. We can't always get it right but we keep trying to improve our performance based on available data and forecasts as much as we can, absent a crystal ball! ☺. We welcome any suggestions you have to help us further improve the program and communications.

Finally, I must thank our Board members. I have already highlighted the roles of Deb Lewis and Mike Braun but I must also mention and thank on your behalf, Hamish Butler, Mary Feddis, Tom Bullard, Tricia Wall, Mark Mirviss and Dan Simmons. Without all their efforts it would be impossible to run our program.

We have another great Far West Masters race schedule lined up for you next season and we will also be hosting the FIS International Masters races at Northstar. Enjoy the summer and start making plans for next season! I look forward to seeing all of you again on the slopes!

## Mammoth Nationals

The 2019 US Masters National Championships were held at Mammoth Mountain CA the week of Mar. 17-23. After a stormy mid-winter that produced record-breaking February snowfall totals at Mammoth and Tahoe ski resorts, a welcome shift to sunny weather finally arrived the week before the start of the event. With the Mammoth Race Department (MRD) crews busy setting fences on the race venues, early-arriving competitors were invited to join weekend training with the Mammoth Masters coaches for section training on the DH and SG tracks.

The gorgeous weather and excellent conditions on the speed track held into Monday for the opening day of DH training, with two training runs completed on a fast and challenging set on the Cornice Bowl/World Cup/Fascination course. With weather forecasts calling for a moderate storm moving in on the scheduled Wednesday DH race day, the jury and MRD made the call to move the DH race up to Tuesday morning. While all regretted losing the additional day of training, the schedule change turned out to be exactly the right call - conditions and visibility were good on Tuesday morning and a very successful DH race was enjoyed by competitors, wrapping up just ahead of the arrival of storm clouds at mid-day.

Wednesday proved to be as stormy as predicted, with wind, snow, and low clouds hampering visibility and closing the upper mountain. Although the storm was forecast to clear and move out on Thursday for SG race day, mountain operations were limited for much of the day by avalanche control work and no racing was possible. Once again the jury and MRD met and came up with a creative reschedule plan to postpone the SG rather than cancelling, with each group running SG on their GS day.

Friday's weather cleared and allowed C/D groups to race SL on Fascination and the younger A/B men to run both their SG and GS races on the World Cup/Terries course. With both races using the same start and finish, all agreed that such a long GS was more than sufficiently challenging!

The final day of competition on Saturday brought another small storm that proved to be far more problematic than expected for racing conditions, with wind, snow, and limited visibility above mid-mountain all day. The C/D SG race was cancelled after jury and crew went up to the course and reported that conditions were not safe for racing on the speed track. The A/B men raced SL on Fascination amid continuing snow that resulted in

challenging conditions all morning. The C/D groups went up to their course late morning, with a shortened GS track on Terries holding the best hope for getting the race off. Alas, despite mass slips by all competitors, there was simply too much new snow to safely clear the track for racing, with continued fog and wind bringing more snow, and ultimately the jury decision was to cancel the C/D GS.

The week wrapped up with the Saturday evening banquet, with race and combined awards. The Division Cup was taken home by the Eastern team and the 2020 Spyder national masters team named. Complete results are published on [usalpinemasters.org/2019/nationals](https://usalpinemasters.org/2019/nationals).

Race photos taken by Susan Morning are available on <https://susanmorning.smugmug.com/MMCFrace>. Proceeds from photo sales support the [Mammoth Mountain Community Foundation](#) and local youth athletes. Direct links to the daily race photo galleries are provided on the [usalpinemasters.org](https://usalpinemasters.org) Nationals page:

Many thanks for the efforts of the outstanding Mammoth Race Department and the support of Mammoth Mountain for putting on our national championships, despite variable weather conditions that challenged organizers and racers through the second half of the week. We also greatly appreciate the support of Bob Davis and sponsor Phillips 66, who provide essential assistance to putting on a quality championship event.

## **John Gianotti**



A masters legend has left us. Just one week before the annual Masters national championships in March that brought together many who knew and raced with him, John Gianotti passed quietly at the age of 90.

John's ski racing career took off in the late 1940's as captain of the UNR ski team, and continued until health and hip problems in his 80's finally closed his racing career, though even then he remained active and continued to ski and golf regularly. John was a great ski racer and champion, winning US and FIS international masters competitions, and was named US masters racer of the year 3 times, a great recognition of his racing accomplishments.

Perhaps even more than his racing, John was known as a great character about whom stories abound among all who knew him. At this season's Viva Italia races at Heavenly, a perpetual FW trophy that John started as a unique tribute to whoever he felt deserving of recognition, the post-race gathering of competitors became a sunny afternoon session of sharing John G. stories.

And at the March national championships, with many of his racing friends from around the country gathered, Rees Palermo gave a tribute to John's memory by sharing stories of their racing adventures, closing with a rousing "Viva Italia!!" cheer from all.

John's spirit will remain a part of Heavenly and the mountains he loved, and his joy in life will continue to inspire all of us who share his love of ski racing. How did it go today? "It was a great run!"

## **Norma Lausman**

Norma Lausmann passed away on May 30 at the age of 96. Squaw Valley's Norma Lausmann, didn't begin racing until her 50s and was an energetic participant, racing each weekend and training mid-week into her 80s. Norma was well known for her completely hand made race suits. The Lausmann family played a large role in the Far West Masters and were also instrumental in Scholarship Program.

## **Far West Masters Season Finals**

The final races of the 2019 Far West Masters season were held at Alpine Meadows on Fri-Sat Apr. 5-6. The winter of 2019 continued its stormy pattern of February and March by bringing us a small spring storm for our season finale. While it wasn't the sunny spring conditions we had hoped for, all were grateful that the warm storm delivered snow rather than rain!

With snow and fog on the upper mountain ahead of the afternoon storm front, Friday's GS was held on Yellow trail. Although a relatively short course, the improved visibility that held just long enough to complete both runs was well worth the venue adjustment.

Friday's SL double-header on Kangaroo was delayed by a rare wind hold even on the lower mountain lifts at the base of Alpine. Thankfully, lifts were able to open at 9am, resulting in only a short delay for the start of the first race. With courses set for the second race but warming temperatures and rapidly softening snow conditions, the race jury announced a hold on the schedule for the second race to assess course conditions. Reluctantly, the jury decided to cancel the second race in the interests of competitor safety and that was a wrap for 2019 racing for Far West masters.



The season finale banquet and awards were held on Saturday evening at The Lodge at Tahoe Donner. In addition to race and season awards, an inspiring group of Far West Masters Scholarship athletes were on hand and some great items were offered at the fundraising silent auction.



Following the presentation of season age class awards and the 2020 leader bibs to the top-5 women and top-10 men in the overall season results, FWM president Ray Tulloch presented our special awards. The New Racer awards went to Cherie Williams (W02) and Wolfgang Virostek (M01). The most-improved men's category had so many worthy candidates that ultimately a tie was declared to recognize the season-long battle between Kirk Swanson and David Piermarini in M07, which went down to the final race of the season to settle. The Cantanho Spirit of Masters award was presented to Shawn Mason, while a new discretionary President's Award was presented with a standing ovation to recognize the gritty comeback to racing after a devastating 2017 ski accident of M11 star Don Merritt.

Congratulations to everyone who competed this season! Complete race results are posted at <https://farwestmasters.org/raceinfo/2019/results> and the Season Awards report is at <https://farwestmasters.org/raceinfo/2019/standings>.



## **Masters Updates**

Here's a summary:

--Masters racers will NOT be required to pass SafeSport and the accompanying background when renewing their Masters license or joining US Ski & Snowboard for the first time. The responsibility to require SafeSport will fall to the local clubs who will decide which adults have more than incidental or unsupervised contact with minors, and thus need to take SafeSport.

--It will still be okay to co-sanction masters and junior events (masters and juniors race together on the same day). This is considered an open, public situation with SafeSport-authorized coaches and others on the hill. In other words, adults and kids are not in one-on-one situations in private settings.

--It will still be okay to have juniors fore-run masters races and vice versa. This is considered an open, public situation with SafeSport-authorized coaches and others on the hill. In other words, adults and kids are not in one-on-one situations in private settings.

--Masters dues will increase to \$125, which brings them on par with a junior membership. This seems fair as we receive similar benefits of membership.

--Short term licenses will increase to \$30 per day, which is a hit. I know STLs are a huge recruiting tool and that most new masters racers participate in two-day or three-day events, which puts their temp licenses at \$60 to \$90 for an event. US Ski & Snowboard's rationale is that its liability for a racer with an STL and a full member is about the same, and its premiums are increasing substantially (\$1 million) over last year. On the bright side, STLs will still accumulate in value toward a full masters membership. Maybe the higher cost of STLs will make full membership more appealing?

## **2019 Al Sise Outstanding Masters Winners**

As any of us who have had the pleasure to share a race hill or ski slope with him have learned, Gate de Mattei is a pretty special guy. He's a committed ski racer, always looking to improve and go fast, and just as committed to getting out on powder days and freesking, leaving companions decades younger in his wake as they try to keep up! And though retired from his medical practice, his trusty black bag and expertise have been a welcome aid many times over the years when accidents or injury strike and knowledgeable advice is needed.



Now our admiration of Gate's continuing excellence is official: the 2019 Al Sise Outstanding Masters awards have been announced and the winners are: Jeannette Saylor (W08, Rocky) and Gaetano de Mattei (M13, Far West)!! Congratulations to both Jeannette and Gate, who demonstrated that excellent racing is accomplished across the entire age spectrum of Masters competition.

Gate continues to impress and inspire all of us, and after celebrating his 90th birthday in February at the Aspen FIS Masters event he is already looking forward to next season when he moves up to M14 class.



**From: Far West Masters Racing Series**

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